

## FEDERAL AGENTS MAY PROBE LAKE BOAT CONDITIONS

Conditions on big excursion steamers plying the lake out of Chicago which tend to influence the younger generation in a moral way are set forth vividly in a report by W. L. Bodine, superintendent of compulsory education, made to Peter Reinberg, president of the Board of Education.

For several years past it has been a well-known fact that officials of the transportation companies operating the excursion steamers winked at flagrant violations of the law, such violations as would be punishable by a heavy fine within the corporate limits of the city or even the state. But the owners of the steamers realizing that Uncle Sam is slow to act, realizing that the police of Chicago and officials of the various states touching upon Lake Michigan are powerless to act, simply looked the other way, squeezed the coin in their jeans realized from the violations and continued to do business.

The report of the investigators for the Board of Education comes as one of the first official reports of conditions on board the steamers and may start something, according to James L. Bruff of the bureau of investigation of the U. S. Dep't of Justice.

Conditions on steamers are practically as bad on one as the other. No sooner have they cleared the harbor en route to Michigan or Indiana points when the bar is thrown open, the slot machines run out from behind the curtains where they are hidden while the boats are in the river and everything is "wide open."

The long green, Uncle Sam's currency, is all that is required aboard the steamers. Children, some of them scarcely tall enough to reach the slots, play their nickels and dimes. Men play dimes and quarters led on by diligent work of the cappers and leather lunged barkers who loudly proclaim with cracked voice and nasal twang that "it's the old army

game gents—somebody's gotta win."

Worn-out carnival and county fair workers are making a bonanza out of the paddle wheel and other games of chance which the yokels at the county fairs no longer fall for. Sometimes the "wheel o' fortune" spins round and you get a pennant. Again it will spin around and you'll get a box of candy. But every time someone wins there are 15 "suckers" who lose. As the pennants and candy are retailed at about 35 cents it would be cheaper in the long run to buy them.

Drunkenness among young men and women is common. Beer and liquor is sold to any one who "looks" old enough to the waiters, most of whom have bad eyesight. The result is that a large number of young people leave the boats intoxicated and in many cases the young women have taken the first step toward the bottom.

"The price" is all that is required to rent a stateroom on most of the boats. Spooning on upper decks is often carried to extremes, but "everything goes" on an excursion. While there are many who ride the boat for the pleasure and are thoroughly respectable, that element who ride "for what's in it" throw a bad light on all others.

That the U. S. Dep't of Justice will take a hand in the matter seems likely. James L. Bruff, superintendent of the Chicago office, stated today that he had no idea but what it was within his power to regulate or prosecute the owners.

"We are very busy with other matters at present and short-handed as well," said he. "If I get a report of the exact time and place of gambling and specific instances and boats are named I will look into the matter and prosecute under the Mann act and on state laws where gambling is proven."

---

The survival of the tightest-fitting is the present state of affairs in millinery.